



Japan-China Relations:
Progress in Building a Strategic Relationship

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Two events dominated the second quarter of 2008: the visit of President Hu Jintao to Japan and the Sichuan earthquake. Tibet, poisoned *gyoza*, and the East China Sea dispute set the pre-summit agenda. Although the summit itself failed to provide solutions, both Hu and Prime Minister Fukuda Yasuo renewed commitments to cooperate in resolving the issues, and a month later the two governments announced agreement on a plan for joint development in the East China Sea. Shortly after Hu's return to China, a devastating earthquake hit Sichuan Province. Japan's response, which included sending emergency rescue and medical teams, tents, and emergency supplies, was well received by the Chinese victims. Beijing, however, quickly pulled back from an early but unofficial acceptance of Japan's Air Self-Defense Force participation in relief operations. By the end of May, Japan's contributions to relief efforts totaled 1 billion yen.

Summit prelude: unrest in Tibet

Rioting and unrest in Tibet at the end of March played into the Japan-China relationship both at the diplomatic and political levels. At the diplomatic level, Japan joined appeals from the international community urging restraint and dialogue with representatives of the Dalai Lama. At the same time, in Tokyo, Prime Minister Fukuda Yasuo was being asked to boycott the Beijing Olympics in protest and whether he would raise the issue with President Hu Jintao at the upcoming summit.

On March 3, responding to questions as to what Japanese diplomats were able to learn from the Chinese government's guided observation tour of Tibet, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Yabunaka Mitoji replied that they had only a limited time and limited access. Nevertheless, they would continue to ask for greater transparency. Earlier, Fukuda said, "we must fully consider whether it would be proper at the present stage to voice criticism or to link the current tense situation over Tibet to the Olympics. He went on to say that he expected "a dialogue to be held between the parties concerned in a way acceptable to both side." As for the Hu visit, he observed that "this year is an important year in Japan-China relations. It will be a good opportunity for both countries to develop bilateral relations." He thought that "the most desirable relationship" would be one that allowed China to say to Japan that "you are wrong on that point," while Japan might advise China "you should do this or that." Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Komura Masahiko told reporters that he would "likely" raise the issue with China's foreign minister during his scheduled April 17-21 visit to Japan.

On April 1, the government announced that members of the Imperial Family would not accept Beijing's invitation to attend the opening ceremony of the Olympic games. In January 2007, the Chinese Ambassador to Japan Wang Yi had invited the Crown Prince and Princess to attend the games and in April 2007, Premier Wen Jiabao had extended an invitation to the Emperor.

Prime Minister Fukuda, however, continued to be pressed on this issue both by the opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DJP) and from within his own Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). DJP Secretary General Hatoyama Yukio in a speech in Hiroshima on April 12 told his audience that it was important to send China a message that Tibet is a significant human rights issue that cannot be disregarded and called on Beijing to open a dialogue with the Dalai Lama in order to deepen mutual understanding. Fukuda continued to resist calls for an Olympic boycott and to insist on "cool-headed" judgment. The day before, Chief Cabinet Secretary Machimura told reporters that in the run-up to the summit, the Japanese government would continue to carefully watch the situation and make its views known to President Hu.

On April 25, Foreign Minister Komura welcomed Beijing's decision to open a dialogue with representatives of the Dalai Lama. On April 26, the Olympic Torch relay passed through Nagano. Though met by pro-Tibet demonstrators, the torch passed safely through the 18.7-kilometer course under tight security. On April 28 China's Ambassador to Japan Cui Tiankai paid a call on Vice Foreign Minister Yabunaka to thank Japan for the safe passage of the torch. Meanwhile, during an interview with *Fuji Television*, Komura renewed Japan's call for greater transparency with regard to Tibet, which he said was a "human rights problem" even as it was an internal affair of China.

Summit run-up: Tibet, East China Sea, and gyoza

On March 29, the *Sankei Shimbun* interviewed Prime Minister Fukuda. When questioned on Japan's seemingly moderate response to the Tibet issue when compared with that of other advanced countries, Fukuda noted that 2008, with the 30th anniversary of the Peace and Friendship Treaty, the G8 Summit in Hokkaido, and the Beijing Olympics, is an important year in the Japan-China relationship and an opportunity to expand the bilateral relationship. Japan attached great importance to the situation in Tibet and strongly hoped that the situation could be quickly and peacefully resolved at an early date. Fukuda urged transparency and a resumption of dialogue with the Dalai Lama on terms acceptable to both sides. Linking Tibet to the Olympics, as some critics were advocating, must be thought through carefully. Asked whether the East China Sea dispute would be resolved before Hu's visit, Fukuda said that during his December 2007 visit to China, both sides had determined to resolve the issue as soon as possible. While maintaining Japan's sovereign rights, utmost efforts were being made to reach agreement and negotiations on various aspects were continuing.

On April 15, LDP Secretary General Ibuki Bunmei and New Komeito Secretary General Kitagawa Kazuo traveled to Beijing and met with Wang Jiarui, head of the International Department of the Communist Party. Both legislators urged a peaceful resolution of the situation in Tibet. On April 16, they met President Hu where Ibuki urged transparency, the release of reports on the actions taken to restore order, and respect for Tibetan culture and traditions. Ibuki

handed Hu a letter from Fukuda urging a peaceful resolution of the situation through dialogue. In reply, Hu, linked protests against the Olympic torch to a well-devised plot to put pressure on China shortly before the opening of the Olympic games. While suggesting that China remained willing to engage in dialogue, Hu made it clear that China could not accept the Tibetans demands for independence. The Japanese party leaders also raised the issue of the poisoned *gyoza* and Hu assured them that he had issued instructions to cooperate with Japan to deal with the issue.

Vice Minister Yabunaka also traveled to China to meet his counterpart Wang Yi, April 14-15, in an attempt to resolve the outstanding issues of poisoned *gyoza*, the East China Sea, and the continuing unrest in Tibet. The meetings failed to bridge the mutual gap over what areas are to be developed in the East China Sea. On April 15, Chief Cabinet Secretary Machimura told reporters that it was “regrettable” that agreement was not reached, but there was a possibility that efforts would continue up to the last minute before the Hu visit. Reports suggested that a final effort would be made during the April 17-18 visit of China’s Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi to Tokyo. Again the two sides failed to resolve the East China Sea issue, but agreed to continue efforts to resolve it. Japanese sources indicated that the two sides were unable to close the gap regarding the areas in which joint development would take place.

Tibet proved to be a major point of contention, with Yang reiterating China’s position that the Dalai Lama and his supporters were “responsible for the riots” saying that if they cease “their independence activities, violence, and efforts to ruin the Beijing Olympics, the door for dialogue will open.” Fukuda told Yang that “it is necessary to face up to the reality that the riots in Tibet have become an international issue” and that China needed to take steps to prevent the issue from having a negative impact on the Beijing Olympics.”

Yang also met with leaders of the DPJ including Ozawa Ichiro, Hatoyama Yukio and Maehara Seiji. Hatoyama and Maehara raised the issue of human rights in Tibet and urged China “to take the international community’s criticism into consideration.” In reply, Yang made clear that Tibet was an internal affair of China. Speaking to the issues of poisoned *gyoza* and the East China Sea, Hatoyama and Maehara also asked for “an early response” from Beijing.

In advance of the Hu visit, former Prime Minister Nakasone’s think tank, the Japan Institute for International Policy Studies, released a study on Japan-China relations titled, “A New Chapter in Japan-China Relations.” The report sets out basic principles to guide the relationship in eight issue areas: The Building of a Broadly Perceived and Amicable Major Power Relationship; Overcoming the Problems of History; the Various Problems that China Faces and Japanese Cooperation with China; Cooperation between Japan and China on the Building of a New Regional order; Strengthening Mutual Understanding between Japan and China; Increasing Economic Interdependence; Resolving Bilateral Conflict through Consultation and China’s Military Rise and Japan’s Security. Nakasone called on Japan and China to build “a relationship in which they can frankly say with courtesy to one another what needs to be said.”

On April 29 Nakasone met President Hu in the Great Hall of the People. Nakasone advanced a proposal for a Japan, China and South Korea Summit as a forum “to help build peace and stability.” Hu thought the initiative would “have a good effect on ASEAN and create momentum for East Asian countries to prosper together,” adding that he wanted to “strengthen economic and

trade cooperation with Japan, South Korea, and other Asian countries.” Hu also thanked Nakasone for Japan’s efforts to ensure that the Olympic torch passed through Nagano without incident. Looking to his visit to Japan, Hu said he hoped that “China and Japan will cooperate in making efforts to establish a strategic mutually beneficial relationship”

Hu in Japan

President Hu arrived in Japan on May 6. Upon arrival, he expressed hope that through the visit “we can increase mutual trust, strengthen friendship, deepen cooperation, plan the future, and open the way for a new stage in the overall development in the Sino-Japanese strategic, mutually beneficial relationship.” That evening Hu met Prime Minister Fukuda for an informal dinner in a Hibiya restaurant known for its links to Sun Yat-sen. Hu informed Fukuda that China would send two pandas to Japan to replace the recently deceased pair at the Ueno Zoo. Outside the restaurant approximately eighty demonstrators carried on a pro-Tibet protest. After the dinner Hu met at his hotel with Tanaka Makiko, the daughter of former Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei, and with the families of former Prime Minister Ohira and former Foreign Minister Sonoda.

On May 7, Prime Minister Fukuda and President Hu met for ninety minutes at the Prime Minister’s official residence. Afterwards the two leaders signed a political document titled “Joint Statement between Japan and China on Comprehensively Promoting a Strategic, Mutually Beneficial Relationship” and held a joint press conference.

In the Joint Statement, the two sides:

- Recognized “that the Japan-China relationship is one of the most important bilateral relationships for each of the two countries” and that “the two countries sole option is to cooperate to enhance peace and friendship over the long term;”
- Reaffirmed that the Joint Communiqué of Sep. 29, 1972; The Treaty of Peace and Friendship of August 12, 1978 and the Joint Declaration of Nov. 26, 1998 served as the “political foundation” for the relationship;
- Resolved “to face history squarely, advance toward the future, and endeavor with persistence to create a new era...” (The *Yomiuri Shimbun* noted that “this time the Chinese side stressed a future-oriented relationship;” }
- Recognized that they are “partners who cooperate together and are not threats to each other” and would “resolve bilateral issues through consultations and negotiations;”
- Resolved “to cooperate together while building frameworks for dialogue and cooperation”; in particular in the enhancing of “mutual trust in the political area: the “promotion of people-to people and cultural exchange; enhancing “mutually beneficial cooperation” and in making contributions to the Asia-Pacific region and the resolution of global issues;

- With regard to Taiwan, Japan reiterated its adherence to the 1972 Joint Communiqué as the foundation of its one China policy.

The document also contained the language that “We will closely cooperate to understand even more and pursue common values,” which was interpreted as reflecting international concerns with the unrest in Tibet.

The joint statement also included an agreement on annual visits by the two leaders; mutual visits by senior officials responsible for national security and singled out energy, the environment, and food (read *gyoza*) and product safety as areas of cooperation. For its part, China expressed a positive view toward participation in negotiations on a post-Kyoto regime on the environment. In a separate document on environmental cooperation, China expressed its willingness to “study methods and measures” to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Japan committed to extend “technological cooperation” in a number of areas including energy-efficiency, clean coal technology for coal-fired power plants, and the recollection of methane and carbon dioxide.

Prime Minister Fukuda opened the joint press conference by expressing his hope for the success of the Beijing Olympics and Japan’s willingness to cooperate in this regard. Fukuda also expressed his appreciation for China’s decision to open a dialogue with representatives of the Dalai Lama. In the joint press conference, he said that “major progress” had been made on the East China Sea issue and a resolution was “now in sight,” while Hu said that a big picture resolution had come into view.

In the afternoon, Hu met with leaders of Japan’s political parties, where discussion centered on food safety, the East China Sea, and Tibet. He also attended a reception hosted by Keidanren and Keizaidoyukai and other leading business organizations

On the evening of May 7, Emperor Akihito hosted a dinner for President Hu. In his toast, Hu expressed his hopes for the future, saying that “Reviewing the past and looking to the future, we have every reason to believe that China-Japan relations are at a new historical starting point with new opportunities for further growth.” In reply, the Emperor placed his faith in the expansion of exchanges between the youth of the two countries and the hope that “the two peoples will look back together on our long history and deepen friendly ties oriented toward the future.” The Emperor also expressed his hopes for the success of the Beijing Olympics.

On May 8, Hu continued meeting with Japan’s political leaders, meeting for breakfast with former Prime Ministers Nakasone, Kaifu, Mori, and Abe (Koizumi did not attend.). He also met with Ikeda Daisaku, Honorary President of the Buddhist Soka Gakkai, whom he praised as someone who “had worked tirelessly over the years on behalf of China-Japan friendship”. Hu followed up with a call on Lower House Speaker Kono Yohei. Without touching directly on the issue of Tibet, Kono said that he thought China should “rationally” deal with its internal affairs. Kono also expressed his hopes for the success of the Beijing of the Olympics and the Shanghai Exposition. Hu responded that Kono was known as an old friend of China, someone who had worked to build the framework for friendly relations between the two countries.

Later, Hu spoke at Waseda University where he noted that, despite recent economic growth, China remained the “world’s largest developing country”, whose growth is “not a threat but an opportunity” and reassured the audience that China “will never pose a threat to any country nor fight for hegemony.” Hu expressed his appreciation for Japan’s positive contributions of yen loans, infrastructure development, environmental assistance, and energy development to China’s modernization. Touching on history, Hu noted that Japan’s past aggression had “brought about enormous misfortune to the Chinese people and also harmed the Japanese people.” He explained that “China remembers history, not for the purpose of continuing to hold animosities, but to hand down an association of friendship to future generations.” He also called for an expansion of youth exchanges and announced plans to invite 100 Waseda students to China.

On May 9, Hu met with the Diet Members Olympic Support Group, visited a Chinese school in Yokohama, and traveled to Osaka where he met with the Kansai region’s business and political leaders. On May 10, before departing for China, Hu toured the ancient capital of Nara and visited the headquarters of Matsushita Electric.

Summit reaction

On May 17-18, the *Asahi Shimbun* conducted a telephone survey, which yielded valid answers from 2,127 respondents or 60 percent of those interviewed. In response to the question whether they appreciated the Japan-China Summit, 35 percent answered “yes”; 47 percent answered “no.” A *Yomiuri Shimbun* door-to-door/face-to-face poll also taken May 17-18 produced valid answers from 1,837 persons or 61.2 percent of those interviewed. In response to the question “Do you appreciate the summit,” 9.3 percent answered “very much”; 36.1 percent “somewhat”; 32.1 percent “very much” did not appreciate and 16.9 did not “at all” appreciate the summit; N/A 5.6 percent. The less than glowing reviews of the summit reflect the reality of a May 1-2 *Mainichi Shimbun* poll that asked whether Japan should change its posture towards China. Of the respondents, 51 percent said that Japan should deal with China in a “stricter manner”; 26 percent said Japan should be “more friendly; 17 percent supported the present course.

East China Sea

On May 15 the *Mainichi Shimbun* reported that Japan and China had agreed to put the issue of sea-boundary demarcation on the back burner and focus efforts on maximum economic benefits that would accrue from joint development. In the process, the two sides were working toward the possibility of developing more than one area. Citing diplomatic sources, *Kyodo News* reported that China was showing willingness to compromise on the area for joint development. In contrast to its previous position of excluding the Chunxiao/Shirakaba field, Beijing informed Japan of the “possibility” of including Chinxiao as an area for joint development.

During the summit, sources close to the on-going discussion told the *Yomiuri Shimbun* the two sides had reached agreement on the “rough area” for joint development. At the same time, a senior Japanese government official told the *Sankei Shimbun* that “only final coordination on a deal remained but to announce it at this early stage would kill the deal.” Speaking in Wakayama Prefecture, Ambassador Cui said that he could not predict when agreement would be reached, but the issue was not one that lent itself to an easy resolution. On the other hand, the past several

years have not been wasted; over that time, an appropriate way of dealing with the issue had evolved. The Japanese media reported that both sides were now working toward final agreement by the July G8 Summit in Hokkaido, which President Hu would attend.

On June 9, Fukuda told the Upper House Budget Committee that resolving the East China Sea was a “problem of time.” Issues relating to joint development and technology had to be worked out and that would take time, but hopefully “not too long.”

On June 18, the two governments announced agreement on a “joint development zone” in the East China Sea. The agreement includes both the Shirakaba/Chunxiao field and a broader area in the Asunaro/Longjing field, which is located north-north-east of the Shirakaba/Chunxiao field and straddles the Japanese claimed mid-line boundary. Private sector Japanese companies as well as government-backed corporations will be allowed to invest in the existing Chinese development in the Chunxiao/Shirakaba field. Specifics regarding drilling locations and investment shares and earnings allocations will be settled in further negotiations. Excluded from the agreement were two areas currently under development by China on its side of the median line as well as the area around the Senkaku Islands. Pending final boundary demarcation, both governments will cooperate in joint development without jeopardizing existing boundary claims. Foreign Minister Komura told reporters that “the agreement is a favorable example showing that the two countries can solve any difficulty through dialogue.”

While the Foreign Ministry in Beijing welcomed the agreement as mutually beneficial and conducive to stability in the bilateral relationship, the *Yomiuri Shimbun* reported that Chinese civic action groups had staged a protest demonstration in front of the Japanese embassy and that internet opposition to the deal was increasing.

Sichuan earthquake:

On the morning of May 13, Foreign Minister Komura said that there were reports of injuries to 40 percent of the approximately 120 Japanese known to be in the area of the earthquake. He also told the press that Japan had informed China that it was standing by and prepared to provide the utmost assistance should China request it. The Foreign Ministry explained that internal conditions in the area of the earthquake were such that even if assistance were accepted, the task of relief would be difficult. Prime Minister Fukuda likened the conditions in China to those following the Kobe earthquake when Japan was not prepared to receive foreign assistance.

On May 15, Beijing announced that it would accept “emergency rescuers from Japan.” Senior Vice Foreign Minister Onodera Itsunori observed that Japan was well experienced in dealing with natural disasters and that “the recent improvement in Japan-China relations may have had good effect.” In response, the first unit of 30 personnel from Japan’s Fire and Disaster Management Agency, the National Police Agency, the Coast Guard and the International Cooperation Agency, left for China from Haneda airport on the evening of the 15th. A second rescue unit of an additional 30 personnel left for China on May 16. Plans to dispatch a medical team were also set in motion. The rescue teams, while assisting in the recovery of bodies, were unable to find survivors and were withdrawn. In response to a request made through the

Japanese embassy in Beijing on May 19, a twenty three member medical team left for China the next day and returned on June 2 after treating 250 emergency outpatients and 250 inpatients.

Foreign Minister Komura told reporters on May 16 that Chinese citizens had expressed their appreciation for Japan's relief efforts at the Japanese consulate in Chongqing with one man saying that as a result of Japan's actions, his "ill feelings toward Japan had changed." Chief Cabinet Secretary Machimura also noted that Chinese citizens had thanked rescue team members and told them that their ill feelings toward Japan had turned into respect and appreciation. *Xinhua* ran a picture of the rescue team in operation and posted it on its website. Internet postings expressed appreciation with some criticizing those taking a hard-line toward Japan.

On May 27, the Chinese government, through the Japanese Embassy in Beijing, requested emergency supplies and indicated that it "would make no difference" if the supplies were transported by Japan's Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF). The *Asahi Shimbun* quoted a senior Ministry of Defense official as saying "I never expected the Chinese to change like this." The following day, Chief Cabinet Secretary Machimura announced the Chinese request and said it was under consideration. Foreign Minister Komura, however, noted that China had not specifically asked for ASDF transport but that "it's all right if we use SDF aircraft." Given the multiplicity of factors involved, he thought that "we need the Prime Minister's judgment." The *Sankei Shimbun* reported Fukuda as saying "send the planes" and on May 29, the Ministry of Defense announced that it would use 3 C130 transport airplanes to carry the emergency relief supplies, with the operation beginning the week of June 1 at the earliest.

At the same time, both governments were moving cautiously out of concern of provoking anti-Japanese sentiment. After consultations with China, Japan decided to shelve plans to use the ASDF and used charter commercial aircraft. A Japanese Foreign Ministry official told the *Yomiuri Shimbun* that the media reporting on the possible use of the ASDF had produced "side effects in China that made it impossible." It was also explained that, at the time of the original request, the possible use of the ASDF was only "one idea," but that Chinese government, at that time, had yet to reach internal agreement on the issue. In Singapore for the Shangri-La Dialogue, the PLA's Deputy Chief of Staff Ma Xiaotian told the *Asahi Shimbun* that he could not "personally" welcome the ASDF, saying that the appearance of Japanese aircraft over China "would have a certain degree of impact on the psychology of the Chinese public."

As of the end of May, Japanese emergency aid and financial assistance totaled 1 billion yen.

Diplomatic Offensive

Less than two weeks after the summit, Prime Minister Fukuda delivered a speech, "Toward the Day when the Pacific Ocean Becomes an Inland Sea" to an international conference on "The Future of Asia" held in Tokyo. The speech was hailed as a "new" Fukuda doctrine and called for increased cooperation within the Asia-Pacific region as well as networking with countries beyond the region. He set out five priority areas for Japan: support of ASEAN's efforts at community building; strengthening of the Japan-U.S. alliance; establishing Japan as a peace-fostering nation; enhancing people-to-people exchanges; and addressing climate change. Fukuda made clear in his remarks that "it is critical that China as a major nation, develop in a stable

manner, and for that sake, Japan intends to cooperate with China where it is able.” Concerned that some might see the emphasis on ASEAN as an attempt to balance China’s growing influence in the region, Takeshita Osamu, the Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary dismissed that interpretation as old thinking, saying that Fukuda was attempting “to move away from that mode of thinking.”

At the same time, the *Nikkei Shimbun* reported on May 15, the government planned to establish a new framework for policy toward Africa, “with an eye on rapid approaches by China and India” to the continent. Key elements of the initiative were reported to include: a doubling of development assistance by 2012 to ¥200 billion; an effort to double Japan’s direct investment to ¥170 billion over the same period; a proposal for an annual dialogue with Africa; and plans to hold working level talks with China on Africa. The new initiative was launched at the Tokyo International Conference on Africa, to be held in Yokohama beginning May 28.

Security

On March 26, the National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS) released its annual report, *East Asian Strategic Review 2008*. Looking ahead, the report judged that “there is no doubt that the Chinese navy will operate outside Chinese waters.” Based on the current modernization of the PLA Navy and its feasibility studies for an aircraft carrier, the study predicted that China would possess an aircraft carrier by 2010 at the earliest and that the PLA Navy will shift from a coastal defense to a blue-water strategy extending to the Indian Ocean.

The report judged that the PLA Navy’s friendly visits to Japan are “intended to promote a peaceful and friendly mood...so as to make Japan hesitant to engage in gas exploration in the East China Sea. By doing so, China intends to establish in effect hegemony in the East China Sea.” The report was also critical of defense exchanges, observing that “the slogan of defense exchanges alone is now a *fait accompli* with no confidence building” and the China is using the exchanges to promote a “peace-like image of itself.” The visit of China’s Defense Minister to Japan in August 2007 was cited as an example of an exchange that produced good feelings but no change in China’s continuing lack of transparency in its military budget. NIDS concluded “China is trying to secure an advantage over Japan by using both hard and soft power.”

On March 31, Vice Minister of Defense Masuda Kohei met Ma Xiaotian the Deputy Chief of the PLA’s General Staff in Beijing. This was the first meeting at the Vice Ministerial level since November 2006. When asked for an explanation of the reasons behind China’s 20 year run of double-digit defense spending, Ma replied that the increase were an unavoidable part of China’s defense modernization, which included rising personnel and material costs. At the conclusion of the talks, the two sides agreed to expand defense exchanges of high-ranking Air Force and Navy officers, to study prospects for cooperation in UN peacekeeping operations, and to hold a working-level meeting in April to discuss the building of a defense hotline. The two sides met in Beijing on April 21 and agreed that a hotline system would enhance mutual trust.

Efforts to build mutual trust continued with the arrival of the Maritime Self-Defense Force destroyer *Sazanami* in Zhanjiang, Guangdong Province on June 24 – the first port call in China of a Japanese warship since 1945. Four hundred Chinese sailors welcomed the *Sazanami* under a

banner that read “Warmly welcoming the MSDF ship on first visit to China.” Rear Adm. Tokumaru Shinichi told reporters that the visit would stand as a “monumental milestone for defense communications” between Japan and China.

With the *Sazanami* carrying additional relief supplies for the victims of the Sichuan earthquake, China’s Foreign Ministry spokesperson Liu Jianchao also emphasized that the visit will “enhance the friendship and mutual trust between the two countries” by advancing defense exchanges and assisting in earthquake relief. Liu was optimistic that the visit would not provoke “public anger.” To lessen the chances of any public reaction, the exchange was limited to on-base activities and a public concert was cancelled due to security concerns. At the same time, the Japanese press reported “deep-seated reactions” within the PLA, with the *Nikkei Shimbun* quoting Admiral Yang Yi as saying that the port call “will easily remind us of our painful memory.” The *Nikkei* also reported “typical” internet postings accused the government of approving “the revival of Japanese militarism.”

Yasukuni: The movie

At the end of March, theaters in Tokyo and Osaka cancelled scheduled April openings of the movie “Yasukuni,” a documentary produced by Chinese director Li Ying. The theaters explained their decision was the result of “concern that it might cause inconvenience to neighboring commercial facilities.” Both the *Yomiuri* and *Asahi* reported that the theaters had received telephone calls demanding the movie not be shown.

Earlier, on February 12, a group of LDP Diet members, led by Inada Akemi, requested the Agency for Cultural Affairs (ACA) to provide the group with an advance showing to review the contents of the film. The ACA, through the Japan Arts Council, had provided a grant of ¥7.5 million to support the making of the movie. The showing took place on March 12 with 40 members of the Diet attending from the LDP, DJP, New Komeito, and Social Democratic Party of Japan. After the preview, Inada announced that “I got from the film the feeling that this was an ideological message that Yasukuni Shrine served as a device to incite the public to war.” The shrine on its homepage announced on April 11 that the film-makers “did not respect” the procedures granted by the shrine in the filming of the movie and that the contents of the film “could give rise to misunderstandings.” At the same time, a key figure in the film, 90 year-old swordsmith, Kariya Naoji, asked that his appearance be cut from the movie.

On April 1, the Mass Media information and Culture Union protested the activities of “rightist groups” hindering the opening of the movie. Cabinet Secretary Machimura said that he did not think that ‘Ms. Inada’s behavior led to the cancellation,’ but, at the same time, he thought it “inappropriate that freedom of expression is affected by insulting pressure.” Despite the protests, Argo Pictures announced that it would go ahead with plans to show the movie beginning in early May. Yasukuni opened in Tokyo on May 3 and in Osaka a week later.

Yasukuni: the Shrine

On April 22, a group of 62 Diet members including former Agriculture Minister Shimamura Yoshinobu, Yamatani Eriko, special advisor to the Prime Minister, two senior vice ministers, and

five parliamentary secretaries visited the Shrine on the occasion of the Spring Festival. A month later on May 23, the government lifted a state-imposed ban on public school organized field trips to the shrine. In response to the question raised by the LDP's Hiranuma Takeo, the government released a Cabinet approved document saying that "it is permissible for school children to visit Yasukuni to learn about Japanese history and culture as part of school education."

Looking ahead

President Hu's visit continued the warming in the Japan-China relationship that was initiated by former Prime Minister Abe. Agreement on joint development in the East China Sea was a major step forward in building a mutually-beneficial strategic relationship. Still, public reaction in China to the possible deployment of Japan's ASDF in the Sichuan earthquake relief operation and to the Shanghai port call of the MSDF warship suggests that both governments will have to proceed cautiously as they work out the details of the East China Sea agreement.

Chronology of Japan-China Relations April-June 2008

March 26, 2008: Japan's National Institute for Defense Studies releases *East Asia Strategic Review 2008*.

March 30-31, 2008: Vice Minister of Defense Masuda Kohei visits Beijing.

April 1, 2008: Japanese government announces that Imperial Family will not attend opening ceremony of Beijing Olympics.

April 1, 2008: Japan's Mass Media Information and Cultural Union protests political pressure on theaters to cancel showing of the movie *Yasukuni* directed by Li Ying.

April 6, 2008: Development ministers of emerging donor countries including China meet in Tokyo.

April 10, 2008: Prime Minister Fukuda Yasuo tells Foreign Policy Study Group that he wants to see Japan increase its ODA budget.

April 12, 2008: Democratic Party of Japan (DJP) Secretary General Hatoyama Yukio in Hiroshima speech calls on China to open dialogue with Dalai Lama.

April 14, 2008: Environment Minister Kamoshita Ichiro eats with Chinese counterpart in Beijing.

April 14-15, 2008: Vice Minister Yabunaka meets counterpart Wang Yi in Beijing; discussions center on Hu visit to Japan, Tibet, gyoza, and East China Sea.

April 15-16, 2008: LDP Secretary General Ibuki Bumnei and New Komeito Secretary General Kitagawa Kazuo visit China, meet President Hu, and urge peaceful resolution of unrest in Tibet.

April 17-18, 2008: China's Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi visits Japan and meets PM Fukuda to advance Hu visit.

April 19, 2008: Zenkoji temple in Nagano is vandalized after refusing to serve as starting point for Olympic torch relay.

April 22, 2008: Japanese Foreign Ministry announces President Hu will visit beginning May 6.

April 22, 2008: Sixty-two Diet members visit Yasukuni Shrine on occasion of Spring Festival.

April 23, 2008: Former Prime Minister Nakasone's Japan Institute for International Policy Studies releases report on Japan-China relations.

April 25, 2008: Foreign Minister Komura welcomes China's decision to open dialogue with representatives of the Dalai Lama.

April 26, 2008: Olympic torch passes safely through Nagano.

April 28, 2008: Japan-China-South Korea eminent persons group meets in Beijing; issues call for FTA negotiations and financial and monetary cooperation.

April 29, 2008: Hyogo prefectural police report pesticide found in frozen Chinese *gyoza*.

April 29, 2008: Former PM Nakasone visits Beijing and meets President Hu.

May 1, 2008: Japanese Foreign Ministry releases survey of six ASEAN countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam) that rank China ahead of Japan as their most important partner by a margin of 30 percent to 28 percent.

May 3, 2008: Movie *Yasukuni* opens in Tokyo.

May 4, 2008: ASEAN Finance Ministers, plus Japan, China, and South Korea meet in Madrid to discuss financial cooperation; agree to \$80 billion currency swap arrangement.

May 5, 2008: Waseda University and Beijing University agree to set up joint graduate program in environmental and sustainable development studies.

May 6-10, 2008: President Hu visits Japan and meets PM Fukuda. The two issue joint statement on "Comprehensively Promoting a Strategic Mutually Beneficial Relationship."

May 12, 2008: China experiences 7.8 magnitude earthquake in Sichuan Province.

May 15, 2008: Beijing announces that it will accept emergency assistance from Japan; emergency rescue team departs for China; second team follows on May 16.

May 16, 2008: Chinese Ambassador to Japan Cui Tiankai expresses thanks for Japanese earthquake assistance.

May 16, 2008: Japan and China sign treaty allowing for exchange of information and evidence in criminal cases.

May 19, 2008: Chinese embassy in Tokyo opens for earthquake mourners as part of China's three days observance.

May 20, 2008: Seventy-five member Japanese delegation, including Tokyo governor Ishihara Shintaro and 30 Diet members, attends inauguration of Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou.

May 21, 2008: Tokyo High Court upholds ¥4 million defamation ruling against Japanese publisher for alleging female survivor of Nanjing Massacre was an impostor.

May 21, 2008: Diet enacts law allowing use of outer space for defense purposes.

May 23, 2008: Japanese medical team departs for China to assist earthquake victims.

May 22, 2008: PM Fukuda calls for cooperation among countries of the Asia-Pacific region; highlights importance of China's stable development.

May 30, 2008: Tokyo municipal government reverses practice established in 1987 and allows Taiwanese residing in Tokyo to register place origin as Taiwan rather than China.

June 1, 2008: Chinese Ambassador Cui appears on *TV Asahi* "Sunday Project." Speaking through an interpreter Cui expresses appreciation for Japan's emergency assistance. In a reference to not using ASDF aircraft, he explains that both governments had agreed to providing assistance in a manner conducive to the Chinese people.

June 3, 2008: Chinese Foreign Ministry announces Maritime Self Defense Force ship will visit China during the month.

June 3, 2008: Former Chinese Ambassador to Japan Wang Yi becomes Director of China's Taiwan Affairs Office.

June 4, 2008: *Sankei Shimbun* reports that Ministry of Defense and U.S. intelligence sources reveal "with high probability" that Chinese Navy submarine test-fired SLBM in Yellow Sea.

June 6, 2008: *Xinhua* News Service attributes deaths of three residents of Qiqihar, Heilongjiang Province to leak of poison gas from chemical weapons abandoned by the Imperial Army.

June 8, 2008: LDP-New Komeito delegation accompanies delivery of relief supplies to Sichuan Province.

June 9, 2008: PM Fukuda tells Upper House Budget Committee that resolving the East China Sea dispute is a problem of time.

June 10, 2008: Taiwanese fishing boat sinks after collision with Japanese Coast Guard ship near disputed Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands.

June 14, 2008: Japan, China, and South Korea foreign ministers meet in Tokyo.

June 16, 2008: PM Fukuda calls for self-restraint in Japan and Taiwan with respect to June 10 sinking of Taiwanese fishing boat.

June 17, 2008: Taiwan's President Ma asserts Taiwanese claim to Senkaku Islands; calls for peaceful resolution of June 10 incident.

June 17, 2008: President Ma announces acceptance of resignation of representative heading Taipei's Economic and Cultural Affairs Office in Japan.

June 18, 2008: Japan and China agree on joint development plan for East China Sea.

June 19, 2008: MSDF destroyer *Sazanami* departs Kure, Japan for China port call.

June 20, 2008: Head of Japanese Coast Guard regional headquarters in Okinawa hands formal letter of apology to captain of Taiwanese fishing boat sunk in June 10 incident.

June 24, 2008: MSDF destroyer *Sazanami* arrives in Zhanjiang, Guangdong Province, China.

June 27, 2008: Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs changes name of China Division to China and Mongolia Division.

June 30, 2008: Japanese and Chinese artists living in Japan hold concert in Tokyo to raise funds for victims of Sichuan earthquake.